



Montana Nonprofit Association

P.O. Box
Phone 406-449-3717 • Fax 406-

SENATE HIGHWAYS AND TRANSPORTATION

EXHIBIT NO. 14

DATE: 3/24/09

BILL NO. SB 329

March 24, 2009

TO: Chairman Brueggeman and Members of the Senate Highway and
FROM: Brian Magee, Executive Director, Montana Nonprofit Association
RE: Oppose SB 329

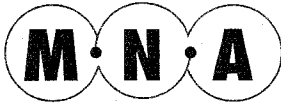
Chairman Brueggeman and members of the Committee, the Montana Nonprofit Association is a membership organization that promotes a stronger nonprofit sector in Montana. MNA's over 530 nonprofit members address a broad array of missions, come from all four corners of the state and range in size from the smallest all-volunteer nonprofits to the largest organizations in Montana.

The Montana Nonprofit Association opposes the provision in SB 329 that will change the specialty license plate program in Montana. This program is a great example of the public and private sector working together to support nonprofits in the state. The license plate program has generated nearly \$4 million dollars to local nonprofits since it began in 2002. However, the revenue is just part of the story.

Specialty plates provide small, local organizations with visibility to potential volunteers and donors. The plates are mini-billboards promoting a broad range of interests. Included in our testimony today is written testimony from some of our member organizations. Testimony by the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center puts it well, "...purchased plates have created interest in the facility, and has directly increased our attendance; giving us the opportunity to fulfill our mission." The plates are also very popular to those who buy them. Many people would be greatly disappointed to lose the opportunity to show the organizations that they support.

During these very unsure economic times for nonprofits, please reconsider this bill that will have a devastating impact on our small, local nonprofit organizations. The specialty plate program has no negative impact on the state general fund. License plates are purchased voluntarily and provide one-time revenue to county governments.

Attached with our testimony, please accept comments opposing this bill from volunteers of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which protects Montana's wildlife; Montana Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation, dedicated to providing care to those with sight, hearing or speech impediments; Vital Ground, a wildlife conservation organization; Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center, located in West Yellowstone; Beartooth Nature Center, the only public facility to house injured native Montana wildlife; Montana Association of Land Trusts, representing a dozen Montana nonprofits, Montana 4-H Foundation, the largest out-of school youth organization in Montana, and the nation; and Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force, which offers pet care for those who cannot afford it.



Montana Nonprofit Association

P.O. Box 1744 • Helena, MT 59624

Phone 406-449-3717 • Fax 406-449-3718 • info@mtnonprofit.org • www.mtnonprofit.org

March 24, 2009

TO: Chairman Brueggeman and Members of the Senate Highway and Transportation Committee
FROM: Brian Magee, Executive Director, Montana Nonprofit Association
RE: Oppose SB 329

Chairman Brueggeman and members of the Committee, the Montana Nonprofit Association is a membership organization that promotes a stronger nonprofit sector in Montana. MNA's over 530 nonprofit members address a broad array of missions, come from all four corners of the state and range in size from the smallest all-volunteer nonprofits to the largest organizations in Montana.

The Montana Nonprofit Association opposes the provision in SB 329 that will change the specialty license plate program in Montana. This program is a great example of the public and private sector working together to support nonprofits in the state. The license plate program has generated nearly \$4 million dollars to local nonprofits since it began in 2002. However, the revenue is just part of the story.

Specialty plates provide small, local organizations with visibility to potential volunteers and donors. The plates are mini-billboards promoting a broad range of interests. Included in our testimony today is written testimony from some of our member organizations. Testimony by the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center puts it well, "...purchased plates have created interest in the facility, and has directly increased our attendance; giving us the opportunity to fulfill our mission." The plates are also very popular to those who buy them. Many people would be greatly disappointed to lose the opportunity to show the organizations that they support.

During these very unsure economic times for nonprofits, please reconsider this bill that will have a devastating impact on our small, local nonprofit organizations. The specialty plate program has no negative impact on the state general fund. License plates are purchased voluntarily and provide one-time revenue to county governments.

Attached with our testimony, please accept comments opposing this bill from volunteers of Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, which protects Montana's wildlife; Montana Lions Sight and Hearing Foundation, dedicated to providing care to those with sight, hearing or speech impediments; Vital Ground, a wildlife conservation organization; Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center, located in West Yellowstone; Beartooth Nature Center, the only public facility to house injured native Montana wildlife; Montana Association of Land Trusts, representing a dozen Montana nonprofits, Montana 4-H Foundation, the largest out-of school youth organization in Montana, and the nation; and Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force, which offers pet care for those who cannot afford it.

March 24, 2009

Dear Chairman Brueggeman and Members of the Senate Transportation Committee:

Thank you for your work on behalf of Montana.

My name is Corky Logan and I am a 20 year volunteer with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation. My current volunteer position is Regional Chair for all the volunteers in the western United States.

I have been involved with the RMEF specialty license plate program here in Montana since its inception in July of 2002. I personally sent the thank you letters to each and every person who purchased or renewed a plate up until two years ago when the state quit giving us the names of those supporters. I still keep the books on the account and report to the volunteers every month on the funds we raise.

Just a little history - since July 2002 we have netted over \$766,000 dollars for RMEF through the sale of these plates. Three quarters of a million dollars!!!! Seventy five percent of the plates sold are to NON-MEMBERS of RMEF. If we were to be reduced to a tiny decal in the corner of a license plate, our net revenue would be reduced by that 75%. These folks support RMEF but they do it because they like the looks of our license plates. Your bill would literally kill our revenue. That revenue has protected, enhanced or outright purchased almost 2,000 acres of land in Montana.

Please, pull this bill. It is absolutely crucial that we do not hurt our non-profits by taking away such a lucrative revenue stream. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Corky Logan
RMEF Regional Chair
3303 N Cable Road
Anaconda, MT 59711
(406) 563-2677 Home & Office
(406) 560-2677 Cell
cjlogan@rfwave.net

We shall never achieve harmony with land, any more than we shall achieve absolute justice or liberty for people. In these higher aspirations, the important thing is not to achieve but to strive.
Aldo Leopold

Montana Lions
Sight & Hearing Foundation

Dennis Kopitzke, Administrator
Box 1266; Forsyth, MT 59327
406-346-1488

djklmk@rangeweb.net
www.mtlionsshfnd.org

The trustees of the Montana Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation unanimously stand in opposition to the passage of SB 329.

The Montana Lions Sight & Hearing Foundation is a small non-profit organization that is dedicated to providing financial assistance to Montana citizens with a financial and medical need. The medical need must be associated with sight, hearing and or speech impairments.

As of March 1, 2009, 475 Foundation license plates have been sold. The annual income from the license plate sales will amount to \$9500.00. Fifty percent of the income stays with the Foundation and is used to help pay the medical expenses of those in need. Over the past 8 years the Foundation has provided an average of \$18,261.38 in payments. All citizens of the State of Montana are eligible to receive financial assistance.

The other fifty percent of the generated income is given to Low Vision Montana. Low Vision Montana provides services to all citizens of the State. LVM can connect citizens who have low vision or blindness with resources that will create and enhance their independence. At the present time LVM provides a statewide 800-telephone referral service and a website that connects those in need to the resources that can provide needed services. LVM is also in the process of developing and delivering low vision services including demonstrations of specialized low vision equipment and technology to visually impaired individuals in selected Montana communities through a mobile service provider.

The income from the special license plate sales is essential for the continuing efforts of the Foundation and Low Vision Montana. With this continuing source of income both organizations will be able to continue helping those Montana citizens in need of assistance.

Respectfully submitted,

Lion Dennis Kopitzke



Building T-2, Fort Missoula Road

Missoula, MT 59804

406-549-8650

www.vitalground.org

March 24, 2009

Montana State Legislature

Senate Highway and Transportation Committee

RE: Senate Bill 329 - Revising Automobile Licensing and Insurance Laws

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee:

My name is Gary Wolfe, executive director of The Vital Ground Foundation.

Vital Ground is a wildlife conservation organization that focuses on protecting crucial habitat for grizzly bears and other wildlife. The organization is based in Missoula, Montana, has a staff of six and a support base of approximately 2,000. Vital Ground is a charitable, publicly-supported nonprofit organization as classified under sections 501(c)(3), 509(a)(1), and 170(b)(1)(A)(vi) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on SB-329 – a proposal to revise automobile licensing and insurance laws. We are specifically concerned about the effect the proposed bill would have in **“eliminating all special, military, collegiate, and generic specialty license plates – except amateur radio operator plates, plates issued to persons with disabilities and disabled veterans, and fleet vehicle plates.”**

The specialty license plate program has been a tremendous asset to Montana nonprofit organizations. Since its launch in 2002, this program has generated several million dollars for Montana nonprofit organizations and the charitable causes they support. It is a wonderful way for Montanans to support worthy causes and visibly promote nonprofit organizations of their choice.

The license plate program is also popular with Montana vehicle owners. According to the SB-329 Fiscal Note, "on December 31, 2008 there were 170,671 currently issued military, veteran, collegiate, generic specialty, and commemorative centennial plates."

Vital Ground invested \$4,000 (application fee) to launch our specialty license plate program in September 2008. We would hate to see this highly successful program abandoned. We do not believe the option proposed by SB-329 of allowing the placement of special organizational decals on license plates will have the same aesthetic appeal to vehicle owners, and will drastically reduce future income to Montana nonprofit organizations generated by this program.

Montana's specialty license plate program is popular, successful and generates millions of dollars for charitable purposes. Please don't eliminate it!

Thank you.

Gary J. Wolfe

Gary J. Wolfe,
Executive Director

DATE: February 17, 2009

TO: Chairman John Brueggeman
and the Members of the Senate Highway and Transportation Committee

FROM: John Heine, Director and President
Nancy Heideman, CFO and Secretary/Treasurer
Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center
West Yellowstone, MT

RE: Oppose Senate Bill 329 – Revise Automobile Insurance and Licensing Laws
Sponsored by: Greg Barkus (R-Kalispell)

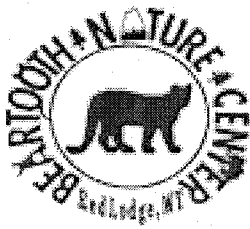
Consider this memo written testimony to oppose SB 329. Specifically, the proposal to eliminate specialty license plates would have a devastating affect on the Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center's fundraising and marketing efforts.

The Grizzly & Wolf Discovery Center in West Yellowstone applied for a Specialty License Plate in late 2002. Over the past six years, the Center has received over \$155,000 in revenue from this program. Also, we were awarded a \$100,000 grant from a foundation whose board member purchased our plate without ever visiting our facility.

The exposure the Center has received from the approximately 7,000 purchased plates has created interest in the facility, and has directly increased our attendance; giving us the opportunity to fulfill our mission.

Without these plates, the Center would be forced to make some difficult budgetary decisions. More than likely the Center will have to cut jobs and scale back its capital improvements, putting the facility at an unnecessary financial risk during these uncertain economic times.

We just do not understand why the State of Montana would want to put an end to a program that benefits so many non-profits throughout the State.

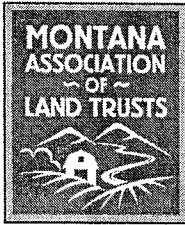


March 20, 2009

To whom it may concern,

This letter is intended to express the deep concern that we at the Beartooth Nature Center in Red Lodge have in regard to SB 329. The specialty plates that we have sell very well and we have come to rely on the monthly contributions that we receive. We also benefit from the incredible advertising that these plates give us. As a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization, the Beartooth Nature Center relies solely on donations to care for our 65 animal residents. We are dedicated to the very best in animal care, conservation and education. The Nature Center is the only public facility in Montana to house native Montana wildlife that cannot be returned to the wild due to injury or human interference. These contributions allow us to free up funds and add it to the care of our animals. The loss of these specialty plates would be a huge blow to our organization and the work that we do. Thank you for reconsidering pushing this bill through.

Jeff Ewelt
Executive Director
Beartooth Nature Center
PO Box 675
Red Lodge, MT 59068
(406) 446-1133



MONTANA ASSOCIATION OF LAND TRUSTS

Box 675 Whitehall, Montana 59759
Glenn Marx, Executive Director 490-1659
Email: montanamalt@q.com
Website: montanalandtrusts.org

Bitter Root
Land Trust,
Hamilton
406-375-0956

The Clark Fork-
Pend Oreille
Conservancy
Sand Point, ID
208-263-9471

The
Conservation
Fund,
Missoula
541-8555

Five Valleys
Land Trust,
Missoula
549-0755

Flathead
Land Trust,
Kalispell
752-8293

Gallatin Valley
Land Trust,
Bozeman
587-8404

Montana Land
Reliance,
Helena
443-7027

The Nature
Conservancy,
Helena
443-0303

Prickly Pear
Land Trust,
Helena
442-0490

Rocky Mountain
Elk Foundation,
Missoula
523-4533

The Trust
for Public Land,
Bozeman
522-7450

Vital Ground
Foundation,
Missoula
549-8650

March 23, 2009

Senator John Brueggeman
Chair
Senate Highways and Transportation Committee

Dear Senator Brueggeman,

The members of the Montana Association of Land Trusts wish to go on record in opposing any provisions in SB 329 that would eliminate or diminish the opportunity for Montanans to support specialty license plates in Montana.

Several members of the Montana Association of Land Trusts – nonprofit organizations that work with landowners to protect open lands – employ specialty license plates to generate income for land conservation programs. Some of the open land and land trust specialty license plates are among the most popular in the state, a reflection of the broad level of support for the work land trusts do.

One of the major benefits of specialty license plates is that people purchase them voluntarily, as a gesture of support and commitment. The act of purchasing a specialty plate is a voluntary expression of something generous, positive and beneficial, and represents a freedom of action that is both affirmative and constructive. It makes little sense to deny Montanans the freedom to voluntarily demonstrate their loyalty or dedication to Montana schools, organizations, activities, special places and more.

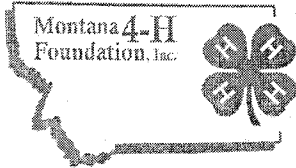
Land trusts agree that specialty license plates should be designed to be readable and safe, and that the license plate numbers and letters themselves should be clear and plain to assist law enforcement efforts. Existing law already gives state agencies the authority to require license plate designs meet specific guidelines or standards. Additionally, if there are administrative difficulties in county courthouses administering the program, surely those issues can be resolved fairly and intelligently without eliminating such a popular and successful program.

We understand the sponsor of SB 329, Sen. Greg Barkus, will be proposing amendments that address the concerns land trusts and others have with the bill. If the sponsor does introduce amendments that address the concerns outlined in this letter, land trusts would support those amendments and recommend their adoption.

Montana's specialty license plates serve our state – and our residents – well, and Montanans deserve the opportunity to demonstrate their positive support, advocacy and encouragement through a successful license plate program.

Sincerely,

Glenn Marx
Montana Association of Land Trusts



Montana 4-H Foundation

P.O. Box 173580 Bozeman, MT 59717-3580 Phone 406-994-5911

E-mail: 4hfdn@montana.edu Fax 406-994-5417

www.montana4h.org

TO: Chairman Brueggeman and Members of the Senate Highway and Transportation Committee

FROM: Sandra Germann, Executive Director

RE: Oppose SB 329

DATE: March 23, 2009

My name is Sandra Germann and I represent the Montana 4-H Foundation. The Montana 4-H Foundation was established in 1969 to help 4-H youth by raising private funds, managing financial resources and partnering with the MSU Extension Service to fund educational opportunities for Montana 4-H youth, volunteer leaders and staff. 4-H is the largest out-of-school youth organization in Montana, and the nation. In 2008 Montana 4-H membership totaled 21,368 youth in 2,466 clubs across the state. The Montana 4-H Foundation gives approximately \$100,000 annually to support 4-Hers in Montana.

Income from License plate sales in the state yields between \$15,000 - \$20,000 annually to our organization with 75% of this income going directly back to the counties and reservations. Of the amount that comes in, $\frac{1}{2}$ goes back to the county or reservation 4-H programs, $\frac{1}{4}$ goes to the local 4-H Council and $\frac{1}{4}$ remains with the 4-H Foundation. Besides showing statewide support of this great youth organization by displaying a personalized 4-H license plate, this is a substantial economic boost to 4-H statewide. For this reason I am strongly in opposition to SB329.

Thank you for all you do for the state of Montana and for your serious consideration of voting to table SB 329.

March 24, 2009

To: Senate Highway and Transportation Committee

From: Ellen King-Rodgers, Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force

Re: Oppose 329

Chairman Brueggeman and members of the Senate Highway and Transportation Committee my name is Ellen King Rodgers and I represent the Montana Spay and Neuter Task Force. MSNTF opposes SB 329.

There are few funding resources for operations and in Montana because there are fewer foundations than almost any of the United States. License plates provide a source of income for our important organization, which offers community pet care events, the centerpiece of which are no cost spay/neuter clinics for those that cannot afford to go to a veterinarian.

In these extraordinary times, Montana Spay//Neuter Task Force is more important than ever. Our Task Force does not make a person fill out forms to prove need. We take a positive step first step with people by engaging them in conversation as equals. The process starts the minute we meet. It is a matter of respect and education and empowerment. So, to lose the license plates would be a real shame for everyone. Stronger people make stronger communities.

Thank you and please join me and oppose SB 329.